

UNCLASSIFIED

E67

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 519

n/a

RELEASED IN PART

CONFIDENTIAL

PTQ0793

B6, B1, 1.4(D)

PAGE 01 CARACA 03287 01 OF 05 310255Z  
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-01	ADS-00
	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	T-00	FMP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/019W		

-----7C46D7 310255Z /22

R 301810Z OCT 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2128  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 1883  
USDOC WASHDC 3193  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
USINT HAVANA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 03287 01 OF 05 310255Z  
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 CARACAS 003287

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/08  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, EFIN, VE  
SUBJECT: POLLING THE POLLSTERS: AN OVERVIEW

CLASSIFIED BY [REDACTED]  
(D)

REASON: 1.5

B6

-----  
SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION  
-----

[REDACTED]  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON

n/a

CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFY AFTER: 30 OCT 2018

Pag»

DATE/CASE ID: 16 JUL 2009 200503654

UNCLASSIFIED

B1

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 520

n/a

B1

2. (C) ONE WEEK SHY OF THE NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS, HUGO CHAVEZ CONTINUES TO HOLD A LEAD IN PRESIDENTIAL POLLING. HOWEVER, HE IS BEING PRESSED BY HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER, WHOSE STEADY ASCENT AND LOW REJECTION RATES MAKE HIM THE CURRENT FAVORITE OF MOST POLLSTERS TO WIN THE DECEMBER 6 ELECTIONS. THAT SAID, THE VOLATILITY OF THE ELECTORATE, THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE NOVEMBER 8 VOTE ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, AND A STILL  
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 03287 01 OF 05 310255Z  
SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF UNDECIDED VOTERS MAKE THE DECEMBER 6 ELECTION IMPOSSIBLE TO CALL AT THIS POINT. THE LACK OF THOROUGH REGIONAL POLLING MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO ANTICIPATE RESULTS FOR THE NOVEMBER 8 ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH MOST POLLSTERS BELIEVE THAT THE BIG WINNERS WILL BE THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (AD) AND CHAVEZ'S POLO PATRIOTICO (MVR, PPT, MAS). END SUMMARY.

B1

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

Page»

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL  
n/a

Page: 521

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CARACA 03287 01 OF 05 310255Z

-----  
WHAT THE POLLSTERS ARE BETTING ON  
-----

5. (U) ALL OPINION POLLS SHOW SALAS' SUPPORT RISING, ALTHOUGH CHAVEZ STILL MAINTAINS A LEAD AMONG LIKELY VOTERS. THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS PRESENTLY TOO CLOSE TO CALL, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE AMOUNT OF TIME REMAINING BEFORE THE DECEMBER 6 ELECTION AND THE VOLATILE NATURE OF THE VENEZUELAN ELECTORATE. THE OUTCOME OF THE NOVEMBER 8 GUBERNATORIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS AND AD'S FUTURE CAMPAIGN STRATEGY WILL LIKELY HAVE AN IMPORTANT IMPACT ON THE ELECTION OUTCOME.

6. (U) MOST VENEZUELAN POLLSTERS THINK SALAS' SUPPORT WILL CONTINUE TO RISE AND ARGUE THAT HE IS THE ODDS-ON FAVORITE TO WIN THE ELECTION, ALTHOUGH THEY CONCEDE THAT CHAVEZ STILL HAS A CHANCE. THEIR CONFIDENCE IN A SALAS VICTORY IS PARTIALLY BASED ON THE FACT THAT SALAS HAS A LOW REJECTION RATE, AND THUS HAS THE ABILITY TO ATTRACT A LOT OF NEW VOTERS. CHAVEZ, ON THE OTHER

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ9735

PAGE 01 CARACA 03287 02 OF 05 301819Z  
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-01	ADS-00
	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	T-00	FMP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/019W		

-----7C1F66 301819Z /38

R 301810Z OCT 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2129  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 1884  
USDOC WASHDC 3194

n/a  
CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

# UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

n/a

Page: 522

DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
USINT HAVANA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 03287 02 OF 05 301819Z  
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 05 CARACAS 003287

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/08  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, EFIN, VE  
SUBJECT: POLLING THE POLLSTERS: AN OVERVIEW

HAND, HAS A HIGH REJECTION RATE AND THEREFORE LIKELY ALREADY HAS  
REACHED HIS VOTE CEILING.

7. (U) SOME POLLSTERS HAVE INDICATED THAT GIVEN THE HIGH LEVEL OF  
TRUST VENEZUELANAS HAVE IN THE MEDIA, A STRONG AND GROWING ANTI-  
CHAVEZ MEDIA CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN STOPPING CHAVEZ  
FROM RISING FURTHER IN THE POLLS.

8. (U) ALL POLLSTERS ARE PREDICTING A HIGH TURNOUT. AS CHAVEZ IS  
MOST LIKELY TO BRING IN LOWER CLASS VOTERS WHO NORMALLY DO NOT  
VOTE, A HIGH VOTER TURNOUT WILL LIKELY AID CHAVEZ.

9. (U) THAT SAID, SOME POLLSTERS BELIEVE THAT AD WILL OFFER COVERT  
SUPPORT TO SALAS FOLLOWING THE NOVEMBER 8 ELECTIONS, ALLOWING  
PARTY MEMBERS TO SWITCH THEIR VOTE TO SALAS. HOWEVER, SHOULD AD  
MAKE A STRONG SHOWING IN THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS, AND SHOULD  
ALFARO DECIDE TO EXPLOIT THIS ADVANTAGE BY MOBILIZING PARTY  
SUPPORT FOR HIMSELF, HE WOULD FURTHER DIVIDE THE MODERATE VOTE  
AND INCREASE CHAVEZ'S CHANCES OF VICTORY.

10. (U) CHAVEZ'S BASE OF SUPPORT IS IN THE LARGER CITIES, AMONG THE  
LOWER CLASSES, OLDER PEOPLE, AND SOMEWHAT AMONG MEN. SALAS IS  
STRONGEST AMONG THE MORE WELL TO DO AND YOUNGER VOTERS.  
CHAVEZ MAINTAINS A DEMOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGE AMONG THOSE MOST  
LIKELY TO VOTE" MEN AND OLDER PEOPLE. BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF  
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 03287 02 OF 05 301819Z  
DECIDED CHAVEZ SUPPORTERS, IT ALSO APPEARS THAT CHAVEZ HAS A

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

# UNCLASSIFIED

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 523

n/a

SLIGHT ADVANTAGE AMONG THOSE STILL UNDECIDED, WHICH ARE MAINLY OLDER AND POORER. WOMEN ARE ALSO MORE LIKELY TO BE UNDECIDED, BUT ARE LESS LIKELY TO VOTE.

11. (U) THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS ARE DIFFICULT TO PREDICT BECAUSE NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE DONE THE NECESSARY STATE-BY-STATE POLLING REQUIRED TO MAKE AN ACCURATE PREDICTION. BASED ON THE AVAILABLE DATA, IT APPEARS THAT THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES WILL WIN THE MAJORITY OF THE GOVERNORSHIPS AND A PLURALITY IN CONGRESS. CHAVEZ'S POLO PATRIOTICO WILL HAVE A STRONG SHOWING--MANY POLLSTERS ARGUE THEY WILL WIN 30 PERCENT OF THE CONGRESS AND SEVERAL GOVERNORS. SALAS' PROYECTO VENEZUELA WILL LIKELY BE THE BIG LOSER WITH 1 OR 2 GOVERNORS AND A FEW CONGRESSIONAL SEATS.

12. (U) SOME POLLSTERS ARGUED THAT POLO PATRIOTICO COULD WIN A MAJORITY OF SEATS IN THE SENATE. ACCORDING TO THESE POLLSTERS, ONE REASON FOR THIS IS THAT THE PARTIES WHICH MAKE UP THE POLO PATRIOTICO HAVE AGREED ON CONSENSUS CANDIDATES IN EACH STATE AND WILL NOT SPLIT THEIR VOTE. A STRONG SHOWING FOR POLO PATRIOTICO WILL GIVE CHAVEZ THE ARGUMENT THAT A SALAS PRESIDENCY WOULD BE A PRISONER OF AD, AS SALAS HAS NO NATIONAL PARTY STRUCTURE TO ALLOW HIM TO ACHIEVE THE POLITICAL REFORMS HE IS PROMISING. CHAVEZ COULD THEN ARGUE THAT HE IS THE ONLY OPTION FOR REAL CHANGE BECAUSE HE HAS PARTY SUPPORT NECESSARY TO TAKE ON THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES IN THE CONGRESS.

-----  
A PRIMER ON POLLING METHODOLOGY  
-----

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CARACA 03287 02 OF 05 301819Z

13. (U) THIS MESSAGE AND THE FOLLOW-ON REPORTS ARE DESIGNED TO GIVE A MEANS OF RATING THE METHODOLOGY OF THE VARIOUS POLLSTERS, SUMMARIZE THEIR ANALYSIS OF THE UPCOMING ELECTION, AND ATTEMPT TO GAUGE THEIR POLITICAL BIASES. OVERALL, THE VENEZUELAN OPINION RESEARCH COMMUNITY IS VERY GOOD BY LATIN AMERICAN STANDARDS. HOWEVER, ONLY DATOS IS REALLY DOING FIRST WORLD LEVEL RESEARCH. ALL OTHER FIRMS ARE USING QUOTAS TO SELECT RESPONDENTS, RATHER THAN A KISH GRID OR NEXT BIRTHDAY METHOD. THE USE OF QUOTAS BREAKS THE RANDOMIZATION OF THE SAMPLE AND MEANS THAT MOST VENEZUELAN POLLSTERS ARE NOT REALLY DOING PROBABILITY SAMPLES, LESSENING THE RELIABILITY OF THEIR RESULTS. (YOU CANNOT EVEN CALCULATE A STATISTICAL MARGIN OF ERROR ON A QUOTA SAMPLE, EVEN THOUGH ALL OF THESE POLLSTERS WILL STILL QUOTE ONE.) ANOTHER MAJOR PROBLEM WITH MOST VENEZUELAN POLLSTERS IS THAT THEY GENERALLY DO NOT SAMPLE IN THE RURAL AREAS (17OF THE ELECTORATE) AND MANY ONLY POLL IN THE MAJOR CITIES (ONLY 33OF THE ELECTORATE) MAKING THEM MUCH LESS USEFUL FOR THE CALLING THE

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

n/a

Page: 524

ELECTION. THESE ARE TYPICAL PROBLEMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND ARE  
GENERALLY A CONSEQUENCE OF COST, NOT IGNORANCE. IT COSTS A LOT  
MORE TO INTERVIEW IN THE RURAL AREAS AND SMALL TOWNS. IT IS ALSO  
COSTLY TO TRAIN INTERVIEWERS IN THE USE OF A KISH GRID WHEN YOU  
HIRE INTERVIEWERS ON AN AD HOC BASIS FOR EACH STUDY. GENERALLY, IF

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

CONFIDENTIAL

PTQ9736

PAGE 01 CARACA 03287 03 OF 05 301819Z  
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-01	ADS-00
	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	T-00	FMP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/019W		

-----7C1F6C 301819Z /38

R 301810Z OCT 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2130  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 1885  
USDOC WASHDC 3195  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
USINT HAVANA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 03287 03 OF 05 301819Z  
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 05 CARACAS 003287

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/08  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, EFIN, VE  
SUBJECT: POLLING THE POLLSTERS: AN OVERVIEW

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

UNCLASSIFIED

Pag»

# UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 525

n/a

POLLSTERS CAN GET AWAY WITH IT AND IT IS CHEAPER, THEY WILL DO IT.

14. (U) WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAIL ON THE TECHNICALITIES OF OPINION POLLING, WE ASKED EACH POLLSTER A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS TO GAUGE THEIR METHODOLOGICAL STRENGTH. SOME OF THE FACTORS MEASURED:

-- FULL-TIME PROFESSIONAL FIELD FORCE (THIS INCREASES OUR CONFIDENCE IN POLLING RESULTS);

-- USE OF STUDENTS AS INTERVIEWERS (DECREASES CONFIDENCE);

-- HIGH NUMBER OF SAMPLE POINTS PER SURVEY (AT LEAST 100, OR NO MORE THAN 10 INTERVIEWS PER SAMPLE POINT) (INCREASES CONFIDENCE);

-- USE OF QUOTAS FOR RESPONDENT SELECTION (DECREASES CONFIDENCE);

-- HIGH LEVEL OF SUPERVISION OF INTERVIEWS (AT LEAST 20 PERCENT) (INCREASES CONFIDENCE);

-- VERIFICATION OF INTERVIEWS (GOING BACK AND CHECKING WITH SOME OF THE RESPONDENTS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE INTERVIEWER ACCURATELY GATHERED THE INFORMATION. HARD TO MEASURE AS EVERYONE OFTEN SAYS THEY DO IT, BUT FEW ACTUALLY DO.) (INCREASES CONFIDENCE);

-- PLACEMENT OF VOTE INTENTION QUESTION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE  
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 03287 03 OF 05 301819Z  
POLITICAL QUESTIONS. (A MAJOR PROBLEM WITH VENEZUELAN POLLSTERS AS THEY OFTEN PUT THE VOTE INTENTION QUESTION AFTER A NUMBER OF EMOTIONALLY CHARGED QUESTIONS THAT LIKELY INFLUENCE THE VOTE INTENTION.) (INCREASES CONFIDENCE);

-- HIGH REFUSAL RATES (QUESTION ITEM AND INTERVIEW) (DECREASES CONFIDENCE BECAUSE IT REDUCES REPRESENTATIVENESS"APPARENTLY NOT MUCH OF A PROBLEM IN VENEZUELA);

-- PAST RECORD IN ELECTIONS (IF THEY HAVE DONE WELL BEFORE--DOXA AND DATOS HAVE UNBROKEN RECORD OF SUCCESS--THIS INSPIRES CONFIDENCE);

-- SAMPLING THE WHOLE POPULATION, INCLUDING RURAL AREAS (INCREASES CONFIDENCE).

15. (U) OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS WHICH WE MEASURED IN OUR INTERVIEWS, AND WHICH DO NOT SEEM TO BE MUCH OF A PROBLEM IN VENEZUELA ARE:

-- WEIGHTS: OFTEN POLLSTERS IN LATIN AMERICA WHO ATTEMPT TO AVOID USING QUOTAS WILL COMPENSATE FOR POOR SAMPLING BY USING HEAVY

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

# UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 526

n/a

WEIGHTS. WEIGHTING CANNOT MAKE UP FOR POOR SAMPLING.

-- USE OF TELEPHONE POLLS: GIVEN THE LOW PHONE PENETRATION RATE IN LATIN AMERICA, TELEPHONE POLLS SHOULD BE AVOIDED FOR ELECTION ANALYSIS. BY ESOMAR STANDARDS, YOU NEED AT LEAST AN 85 TELEPHONE PENETRATION RATE IN ORDER FOR TELEPHONE POLLS TO BE USEFUL FOR ELECTION PURPOSES. VENEZUELA ONLY HAS A 53 PENETRATION RATE.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CARACA 03287 03 OF 05 301819Z

-- USE OF STREET CORNER INTERCEPTS: A PROBLEM IN MANY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, LIKE MEXICO. NO MATTER WHAT THE JUSTIFICATION GIVEN FOR THIS TYPE OF SAMPLING, THIS IS A SAMPLE OF CONVENIENCE, AND NOT ONE THAT ACCURATELY REPRESENTS THE POPULATION. ONE SHOULD ALWAYS MAKE SURE THAT ALL OF THE INTERVIEWS WERE DONE FACE TO FACE, IN THE RESPONDENT'S HOME.

-- A SUFFICIENTLY LARGE SAMPLE, BUT NOT SUSPICIOUSLY LARGE SAMPLE. THE KEY THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE WITH THE SURVEY SAMPLE IS NOT THE SIZE, BUT HOW REPRESENTATIVE IT IS OF THE POPULATION. NEVERTHELESS, THE SMALLER THE SAMPLE SIZE, THE LARGER THE MARGIN OF ERROR (SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN ONLY CALCULATE WITH A PROBABILITY SAMPLE.) ELECTION POLLS SHOULD GENERALLY INCLUDE AT LEAST 1000 RESPONDENTS, WHICH HAS A MAXIMUM MARGIN OF ERROR OF PLUS OR MINUS 3.1 PERCENTAGE POINTS. EACH INDIVIDUAL PERCENTAGE RESULT FROM THE WHOLE SAMPLE CARRIES THIS MARGIN OF ERROR, WHICH MEANS THAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TWO CANDIDATES MUST BE 6.2 PERCENTAGE POINTS OR MORE TO BE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT. IF YOU ARE COMPARING SUBSAMPLES BASED ON, FOR EXAMPLE AGE OR GENDER, THE MARGIN OF ERROR SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASES. BECAUSE OF THE MARGIN OF ERROR, IN A CLOSE RACE A POLLSTER WOULD NEED SUBSTANTIALLY MORE THAN 1000 RESPONDENTS TO

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

CONFIDENTIAL

PTQ9738

PAGE 01 CARACA 03287 04 OF 05 301820Z  
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-01	ADS-00
	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	T-00	FMP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/019W		

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED



UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 527

n/a

-----7C1F7A 301820Z /38

R 301810Z OCT 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2131  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 1886  
USDOC WASHDC 3196  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
USINT HAVANA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 03287 04 OF 05 301820Z  
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 05 CARACAS 003287

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/08  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, EFIN, VE  
SUBJECT: POLLING THE POLLSTERS: AN OVERVIEW

ACCURATELY PREDICT AN ELECTION. BEWARE OF POLLS THAT REPORT A VERY LARGE SAMPLE SIZE (7000+), ESPECIALLY IF THE SURVEY WAS COMPLETED IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. VERY LIKELY, THIS SURVEY WAS DONE VIA STREET CORNER INTERCEPTS, WITH THE RESULTING PROBLEMS LISTED IN THE PROBLEM ABOVE.

16. (U) ANOTHER ISSUE THAT IS IMPORTANT, BUT USUALLY DIFFICULT TO GAUGE WITHOUT OBSERVING THE FIELDWORK, IS HOW REPRESENTATIVE A SAMPLE THE POLLING FIRMS ARE DRAWING IN THE POOR AND RURAL AREAS. AS WITH MOST ISSUES IN OPINION RESEARCH, THE EASY OPTION IS NOT THE METHODOLOGICALLY SOUND OPTION. MANY POLLSTERS WILL JUST SAMPLE THE AREAS AROUND MAJOR CITIES OR AROUND THE MAJOR HIGHWAYS AND CALL THAT THEIR "RURAL" SAMPLE. THE PEOPLE IN THESE AREAS GENERALLY THINK MORE LIKE URBAN DWELLERS, AND DO NOT REALLY REPRESENT RURAL OPINION. SIMILARLY, MANY POLLSTERS WILL JUST INTERVIEW ON THE EDGES OF THE POOR SECTIONS TO FILL THEIR QUOTA OF D AND E CLASS RESPONDENTS. THE SAME PROBLEM RESULTS, AS THESE BORDERLINE D AND E RESPONDENTS GENERALLY DO NOT REALLY REPRESENT THEIR CLASSES. LATIN AMERICAN POLLSTERS NEED TO GET OFF THE MAIN ROAD IN THE RURAL AREAS AND DEEP INTO THE BARRIOS IN

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

UNCLASSIFIED

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 528

n/a

ORDER TO GET A TRULY REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE. IN VENEZUELA, AS NOTED PREVIOUSLY, MOST POLLSTERS AVOID RURAL AREAS BUT APPEAR TO BE GETTING A DECENT SAMPLE IN THE BARRIOS.

17. (U) ONE FINAL ISSUE INVOLVES THE USE OF "PUSH POLLS," OR POLLS  
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 03287 04 OF 05 301820Z  
WITH BIASED QUESTIONS, SAMPLES, OR JUST PLAIN ALTERED DATA THAT ARE PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS TO TRY AND PUSH VOTERS TO ONE CANDIDATE OR ANOTHER. ALTHOUGH EVERY OPINION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION CONDEMNS THIS TYPE OF POLLING, IT DOES STILL OCCUR AND SHOULD BE GUARDED AGAINST AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. ALLEGATIONS OF PUSH POLLING HAVE BEEN MADE DURING THIS CAMPAIGN, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO SALAS ROMER'S RISE IN THE POLLS. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE SOPHISTICATED OPINION RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT AND THE PRESENCE OF MULTIPLE POLLSTERS, IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO DO, ESPECIALLY OVER A LONG PERIOD. A FAMOUS EXAMPLE OF PUSH POLLING DONE IN THE U.S. OCCURRED DURING THE 1939-1941 PERIOD, WHEN BRITISH INTELLIGENCE, USING AN ASSET AT GALLUP, AS WELL AS THEIR OWN PROPRIETARY THINK TANK, ALTERED POLL RESULTS FOR AMERICAN PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT CONSUMPTION. THE GOAL WAS TO SHOW GREATER PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR, SUPPORT FOR LEND-LEASE TO BRITAIN, ETC. IF AMERICAN GALLUP POLLS CAN BE ALTERED, ANY FIRM IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO MANIPULATION. THE BEST WAY TO GUARD AGAINST THIS IS TO NOT RELY ON A SINGLE FIRM AND ALWAYS TO GAUGE THE POTENTIAL POLITICAL BIAS OF A PARTICULAR POLLSTER AND HOW IT MIGHT AFFECT THEIR RESULTS.

-----  
THE REPORTING OF POLLING RESULTS  
-----

18. (U) THE ELECTION POLLS REPORTED IN THE PRESS IN VENEZUELA HAVE BOUNCED AROUND CONSIDERABLY IN RECENT MONTHS. THERE IS A QUALITY ISSUE BETWEEN THESE FIRMS, BUT THE MAIN REASON FOR THE FLUCTUATION IS THE WAY THE POLLS HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN THE PRESS. ONE DAY THE PRESS WILL REPORT A POLL OF ONLY REGISTERED, LIKELY VOTERS, IN THE MAJOR CITIES. THE NEXT DAY THEY WILL REPORT A POLL  
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CARACA 03287 04 OF 05 301820Z  
OF ALL ADULTS FROM POPULATION CENTERS OF 2500 AND ABOVE. THE DIFFERENCE IN THE RESULTS IS DRAMATIC. THE REAL ISSUE IS THAT TWO POLL RESULTS WITH DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT SAMPLES ARE PRESENTED IN THE PRESS TO BOTH REPRESENT THE VENEZUELAN VOTE. IN ORDER TO ACCURATELY COMPARE TWO POLLS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO CHECK:  
-- TIMING: FIELD DATES OF THE TWO POLLS

-- TARGET POPULATION: WHAT POPULATION SIZE AND ABOVE WAS

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Page: 529

n/a

INCLUDED IN THE POLL SAMPLE? URBAN AND RURAL? REGISTERED VOTERS  
OR ALL ADULTS?

-- WHAT PORTION OF THE SAMPLE ARE THEY REPORTING FOR THEIR  
ELECTION FIGURES: THE WHOLE SAMPLE, OR JUST THOSE WHO SAID THEY  
WERE LIKELY TO VOTE IN THE NEXT ELECTION?

-- MARGIN OF ERROR: ADD THE MARGIN OF ERROR OF THE TWO POLLS. IF  
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ELECTION RESULTS OF THE TWO POLLS IS  
NOT LARGER THAN THE SUM OF THE TWO MARGIN OF ERROR, THE  
DIFFERENCE IS NOT STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT. IN OTHER WORDS,  
ALTHOUGH THE POLLS MIGHT SHOW DIFFERENT RESULTS, THIS MAY BE DUE  
TO STATISTICAL ERROR RATHER THAN A REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE  
POLLS.

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

CONFIDENTIAL

PTQ9739

PAGE 01 CARACA 03287 05 OF 05 301820Z  
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-01	ADS-00
	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	T-00	FMP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/019W		

-----7C1F87 301820Z /38

R 301810Z OCT 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2132  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 1887  
USDOC WASHDC 3197  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
USINT HAVANA

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

# UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

n/a

Page: 530

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 03287 05 OF 05 301820Z  
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 05 OF 05 CARACAS 003287

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/08  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, EFIN, VE  
SUBJECT: POLLING THE POLLSTERS: AN OVERVIEW

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

19. (C) POLLING RESULTS PRESENT A SNAPSHOT OF THE ELECTORATE AT THE MOMENT OF THE POLL. BASED ON THAT SNAPSHOT, IF THE ELECTIONS WERE HELD TODAY, CHAVEZ WOULD WIN. HOWEVER, THAT SNAPSHOT CANNOT BE USED TO PREDICT WHAT WILL HAPPEN ON DECEMBER 6. VOTER VOLATILITY AND THE OTHER FACTORS MENTIONED ABOVE CLEARLY LIMIT THE PREDICTIVE USE OF POLLS. THE BELIEF WE ENCOUNTERED AMONG MANY POLLSTERS THAT SALAS ROMER IS POSITIONED TO WIN THE DECEMBER 6 ELECTIONS IS BASED ON AN EXTRAPOLATION OF CURRENT TRENDS AND SOME SHAKY POLITICAL ASSUMPTIONS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSCORE THAT THE DECEMBER 6 ELECTIONS ARE STILL MORE THAN A MONTH AWAY. MANY UNKNOWN FACTORS, INCLUDING THE RESULTS OF THE NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS, WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON VOTERS OVER THE NEXT SIX WEEKS. THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS STILL TOO EARLY AND TOO CLOSE TO CALL.

20. (C) THE SEPTELS WHICH FOLLOW WILL LOOK AT EACH INDIVIDUAL POLLING FIRM OR POLLSTER INTERVIEWED, AND WILL PROVIDE A BASELINE FOR ANALYSTS AND OBSERVERS TO USE WHEN COMPARING AND CONTRASTING POLL RESULTS.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 03287 05 OF 05 301820Z  
MAISTO

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

# UNCLASSIFIED